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ABSTRACT

Cooperation in Documentation and Communication (CODOC), a computerized system designed to provide a quick and economical method of in-depth access to individual publications within a government documents collection, currently operates as an information network in Ontario and Quebec and independently in several other libraries in Canada and the United States. CODOC utilizes codes derived from the Guelph document system as shelf locators, with access through corporate and/or personal author, title, series and serial title, and key words. This system, which gathers each participating library's master files twice each year and merges them to create a union shelf list, also creates separate indexes to corporate authors and series, along with monthly cumulated supplements. The new objectives of access, consistency with some tolerance of local variation, and accuracy are more generalized than the initial objectives, which addressed more specific issues and were unattainable because of the conflict between in-house commitments and CODOC requirements. (Author/MBR)

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CODOC

a quick, inexpensive, computer-based
system for handling government
documents

by

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ABSTRACT

Much has been written in the literature recently concerning the application of machine technology to complex library operations. This paper describes a computerized system specifically designed to provide a quick and economical method of in-depth access to individual publications within a government documents collection. The system, CODOC, is currently operated in a network configuration in Ontario and Quebec and independently by several other libraries in Canada and the United States.

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THE PROBLEM

There seem to be two time-honoured methods for handling government documents in libraries. One is to catalogue them using whatever system is used for the rest of the collection, usually the Library of Congress System or the Dewey Decimal System. The other is to arrange them by government of issue and attempt to access them using whatever lists or finding aids the respective governments may produce.

While the first alternative, full cataloguing, may seem to offer many advantages, it is prohibitively expensive. Estimates of cataloguing costs up to \$15 per item and beyond are not uncommon. If, in fact, full or even short cataloguing is pursued, there is usually great reluctance to lavish \$15.00 worth of cataloguing on a four-page pamphlet whose information will probably appear in more substantial form within two years. If it is catalogued, an impressive amount of money is expended. If it isn't the data it contains, which may be highly significant despite its brevity, could effectively be irretrievable for its first two years of life: possibly the period when it is most useful. Few are the libraries in this time of austerity that can afford to catalogue all of the government and corporate publications in their collections which may be of use to their patrons. Even those who are currently doing so could probably put the funds and staff time to better use.

The second approach, access by individual government lists and finding aids, is well known to most of us. Access in this way can most charitably be described as "uneven". The user is totally at the mercy of the individual governments. Access to U.S. federal material is relatively good using the U.S.G.P.O. lists and the indexes produced by Carrollton Press and others. Similarly, Ontario provincial documents are moderately accessible using the Bishop and MacTaggart bibliographies prior to 1970 and the Ontario government lists and the Profile index thereafter. On the other hand, accessing Canadian federal documents using individual annual cumulations which arrive eighteen months late, and monthly bulletins that are four or five months behind, is less satisfactory.

For any issuing body, there is usually a lag of several months between publication of the document, its listing in a finding tool, and the arrival of said tool in the library. Even assuming that all the necessary lists existed and were relatively complete and up-to-date, the joys of persisting tenaciously through eleven lists to access Canadian information, or worse still fifty-one lists to

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access U.S. publications, are not to be recommended. The possibility of hunting for a subject in the entire collection, using a potentially infinite number of separate lists, is, to say the least, discouraging to the serious researcher. What is needed is a system that will give access quickly and inexpensively to the total collection, and to each publication promptly after it arrives in the library.

THE IN-HOUSE SYSTEM

With these needs in mind, in the 1960's, Margaret Beckman, the chief librarian of the University of Guelph, designed the Guelph document system which now forms the basis of Codoc. Admittedly somewhat "quick and dirty", this computer-based system gives an admirable degree of access by corporate author, personal author, title, series and serial title, and key word, to all documents regardless of their country of origin. The code, which is used as a shelf location instead of a Library of Congress or Dewey call number, consists of letters and numbers to represent:

- the country of issue
- the level of government
- the geographical area of the country for governments below federal.
- the department of issue
- the subdivision of the department of issue
- the year of publication
- a cutter number representing the title.

Prov/
Country Part State Organization Year Title Cutter/Series No.

C	A	2	O	N	A	F		1	9	D	1	1							
2	3	4	5	6	7	8													

Coders, who need not be and at Guelph are not professional librarians, use a coding manual and the precedents already in the shelf list to assist them. They record from the document in hand onto the coding sheet the code and whatever bibliographic information should be entered into the record:

- the corporate author
- the title
- the names of any personal authors
- series and/or serial titles
- notes as appropriate

At the same time the code is placed on the document which can then be sent directly to the shelves. The completed coding sheet is set aside for inputting to the in-house data base in one of a variety of ways depending upon the institution.

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At the University of Guelph inputting is to a batch tape mounted on a mini-computer, using a CRT terminal. At intervals (currently bi-weekly) the batch tape is merged with the master file which is also on magnetic tape, and a paper supplement to the catalogue is produced as a product of the merge. At the beginning of each semester (three times per year) a complete new catalogue is produced on microfiche from the master file. Thus the complete catalogue is never more than four months out of date, the supplements are up-to-date within two weeks, and the documents themselves could conceivably be on the shelves the same day they arrive in the department. Other institutions using the system use different methods of inputting, such as key-punching or typing for optical scanning. They can also update their catalogues at different intervals and produce them on paper rather than 'fiche if the data base is small enough. On-line patron access to the data base is an obvious and possible goal using this system.

At the University of Guelph there is a body of about 300,000 documents completely coded. They are represented by 160,000 separate records, each of which can be accessed in the catalogue by author, title, key word and corporate author. The accession rate is about 3000 items monthly and all material is coded using four coders and an input typist whose salaries total about \$800 weekly; about the equivalent of two and a half professional cataloguers. Thus the system fulfills the mandate admirably. It is fast and relatively inexpensive, and it gives very effective access to all the documents for which it is used. Because it is cheap there is no hesitation about coding small or temporary publications. The decision to code or not to code would cost more in time/money than entering them into the system.

FORMATION OF CODOC

The features of the Guelph Documentation System began to attract the attention and interest of other university libraries in Ontario. Early in 1971, the Universities of Western Ontario and Guelph entered into an agreement for the joint, cooperative use of the Guelph Documentation System. The agreement specified that Western would use and apply the System as it was developed and applied at Guelph. Western accepted the coding and corporate authors created by Guelph. A sharing arrangement was developed whereby Guelph ran certain programmes at Guelph and Western performed other activities associated with the joint use of the System.

During the same period other university libraries, McMaster, Queen's Waterloo, began to apply the Guelph Documentation System for their in-house processing of documents. In 1972 these libraries plus several others, requested to join the informal "cooperative". They were accepted as members

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under the same terms as Western, i.e. the System would be used as developed at Guelph. In April, 1973, a proposal was submitted to the Council of Ontario Universities recommending the formal establishment of the Ontario Universities' Library Cooperative System within the organizational framework of the Council. With the creation of OULCS, ownership, operation, and further development of the System was transferred to the newly created OULCS Documents Project, now call CODOC, (COoperative DOcuments). Those interested in a more detailed history of library cooperation in Ontario are directed to read OULCS Handbook and Organization Guide. At present, CODOC is being used cooperatively by fifteen libraries in Ontario and Quebec. Members of CODOC are: Carleton University, Ottawa; Lakehead University, Thunder Bay; Laurentian University, Sudbury; McMaster University, Hamilton; Queen's University, Kingston; University of Guelph, Guelph; University of Ottawa, Ottawa; University of Toronto, Toronto; University of Waterloo, Waterloo; University of Western Ontario, London; University of Windsor, Windsor; Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo; Ecole Polytechnique, Montreal; Universite de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke and a federal government library, Department of External Affairs, Ottawa.

OPERATION OF THE CODOC SYSTEM

CODOC functions as an in-house system as described at the beginning of this paper. Twice each year, in June and December, each library's master files are merged to create a Union Shelf List of documents, a Title Listing which is also an Index to the Union Shelf List, and Index to the Corporate Authors and Series names appearing on the Union Shelf List. The current cumulated Union Shelf List contains approximately 350,000 records. Monthly cumulated supplements are also produced. Each member consults the Shelf Lists, extracting the record for its inhouse date base, making changes where necessary. On a monthly basis, extract runs are processed in batch mode against the machine readable union file and tapes are returned to the appropriate library for integration with its in-house data base.

The CODOC system is operated at the Computing Centre, McMaster University, and coordinated and supervised by the systems analyst employed by the Office of Library Coordination. The analyst works full time on the System and acts as consultant to the Executive Committee, receiving advice and recommendations from a systems group formed by representatives of the member institutions.

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ORGANIZATION OF THE CODOC GROUP

The objectives for the CODOC Project are:

1. to develop a Union list of government publications for the participating libraries through the shared use of the Guelph Document System;
2. to establish compatible routines for processing government publications within the participating libraries, through the use of standardized coding sheets, manuals, etc.;
3. to reduce the duplication of document coding effort among the participating libraries by assigning responsibility for original coding of publications from different government jurisdictions to individual libraries;
4. to rationalize collection development through assignment of collection responsibility for different government jurisdictions to individual libraries;
5. to establish mutually acceptable system documentation requirements so that the standardized system can be operated at the campus computer centre of the participating library;
6. to establish routines for converting manual files of government publications to the machine-readable system.

As the CODOC group attempted to achieve its stated objectives, it became apparent that desired progress was slow, that an extraordinary amount of time was being spent by many of us with comparatively insignificant results. The group appointed a committee to examine objectives and to make recommendations to the members. In October 1975, after considerable discussion, a major change in the organizational structure of the CODOC group was achieved. An executive group and several committees were formed, charged with specific responsibilities. A Standards Committee was created, whose first objective was the preparation of a coding manual which would outline in detail procedures to be used by each institution. The manual, recently revised, provides step-by-step instructions to the coding staff. Questions of interpretation, conflicts, etc. are discussed by the Standards Committee at their regular meetings. Their decisions are conveyed to the group. In conjunction with the issuing of the revised coding manual, a seminar was conducted in June, 1976 attended by every coder from each member institution.

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Consistant with objective #3 (reduction of duplicate coding effort), a Committee on Coding Responsibility was formed. Its task was to survey each member's collection for a particular jurisdiction and assign areas of coding responsibility to the members. For example, Guelph is responsible for the original coding of Agriculture Canada publications, while McMaster is responsible for United Nations publications. These institutions code the documents, while the other members extract records needed from the union file for their in-house data base.

The group soon realized that there were a number of areas concerning public service which might usefully be examined on a cooperative basis. Accordingly, a Public Service Committee was formed, which gives advice to the group and discusses such activities as orientation, training, reference tools, etc. It also produces a newsletter, INPUT, which provides information to CODOC members relating to the activities of the group and news of new documents.

FUTURE OF CODOC

During the past four years, much has been accomplished: a union file has been created; compatible processing routines have been established; some reduction in coding work load has been realized; and standardized system documentation has been prepared. However, we have become acutely aware of the conflict between in-house commitments and CODOC requirements. After considerable discussion which recognized obstacles to the creation of a true union file it was proposed that we restructure the union system and its products in order to recognize the local requirements of a large number of users. This restructuring has as its objectives:

1. to provide easy and accurate location of records in the file;
2. to provide as much consistancy as possible between records by means of a universal standard;
3. to provide accurate and easy extraction of records from the union file for in-house use;
4. to accept local variations to a record in addition to the standard form.

The plan for the restructuring of the CODOC System is well underway. The final products of the system will be: a Title Access Master Catalogue replacing the Shelf List and Title Index; A Publishing History/Authority Catalogue, associated authority files and linking mechanisms.

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DOWN THE ROAD

The success of CODOC in Ontario has encouraged the participants to offer the system through a leasing agreement. Agreements have been made with several libraries in Canada and the United States. These institutions, it is hoped, will develop networks similar to the one in Ontario. A national data base of government documents is no longer the unfulfilled dream of documents librarians. In addition, the CODOC file will soon be available on-line through CISTI, CAN/OLE data bases. Several other commercial data base suppliers have expressed interest in CODOC.

The authors wish to thank members of the CODOC Group, past and present, who have given considerable time and energy towards the success of CODOC.